

i didn't mind. it's flattering
to be argued about. i tilted
the bottle of cognac and sat
back. julian, in spite of his
education, and mike, in spite
of his lack of same, both
made a number of good points.

by the end of the evening
i was feeling a trifle self-
conscious and more than a
trifle bored and i'm relieved
the subject has never come up
again. the only reference
made to that night was on
the following holiday when
old mike greeted me by saying
"here comes shakespeare,
hide the cognac."

of course
julian immediately
handed me the bottle
of v.s.o.p.

RAINY DAY WOMAN #1

when i was 15
on my first job
as a bus boy the best
looking waitress, 10
years older, used to
tease me. when it
rained she would say:
"we shouldn't be working,
this is baby-making weather."
i poured coffee on my hand
when she walked by
and before long she started
'forgetting' to leave
my 15% when she went home.
she was a master of
the quick remark
delivered on the fly
and a month passed before
i grabbed the manager
back by the dishwasher.
he gave her a list
of the days she owed
me for. it rained

a helluva lot that year
but she never mentioned
babies again.

-- Christopher Daly

Long Beach CA

THOSE PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA EYES

Aunt Maple at 105 totters into breakfast, wants the pancake on the bottom of the stack, "They're all the same!" shouts the husband of her dead sister's daughter (nephew-in-law?), only she can't hear because she's got her hearing aid turned off, saving batteries, a whole box of old batteries under her bed, "They're not really 100% dead," a dab of soybean margarine, "I don't know whatever happened to butter...", "It got overpriced!" yells her dead sister's daughter's husband, but not even the vibrations get through, and her niece says kind of to the air over the center of the table, "I don't know why she even wears that silly thing if she doesn't want to put any batteries in it," Aunt Maple squirrels her way through one pancake, then another two, always dealing from the bottom of the deck, a cup of cream-swamped, sugar-supercharged coffee, then spiders into the living room where she sits on the sofa watching her watch,

10 AM, a car comes dust-clouding down the road, pulls up in front,

"Who's that?" asks Margaret-Niece.

Aunt Maple already at the front door as Mr. Knit Orlon rings the bell,

"Miss Maple Watkins?"

"That's me!" she says, he's swimming in shame/consternation/befuddlement,

"I try to block these things," says Margaret-Niece,

"I sell life insurance," says Mr. Knit Orlon,

"You're neither the first nor the last,"

"Well...", he stands there in a puddle of confusion,